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ABSTRACT

Mexico has been described as a collectivist country, a culture in which its members perceive themselves as part of a group, value interdependence, and derive their identities from the group. This study examined collectivism among Mexican college students (N=79) at two universities. Subjects completed the Individualism-Collectivism Scale. The subscales were labeled as Spouse, Kin, Friend, Parent, Coworker/Classmate, and Neighbor. Scores were most collectivist on Parent and Kin subscales. Women scored as more collectivist on the Parent subscale than did men. Students' scores also differed according to university attended. Those attending a university which charged moderate tuition scored as more collectivist on the Parent and Spouse subscales than those attending a university which charged higher tuition, thus attracting students from wealthier backgrounds. There was also an interaction between gender and university attended with women attending the middle socioeconomic university scoring as most collectivist. These findings support a previous finding that links an emphasis on family relations with collectivism. (Author/ABL)

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Collectivism among Mexican University Students

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Paper presented at the 62nd Annual Meeting of the Midwestern Psychological Association. For a copy of the complete paper, write to Gina M. Shkodriani, Department of Psychology, Saint Louis University, 221 North Grand Blvd., St. Louis, MO. 63103.

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Abstract

Seventy-nine Mexican university students completed the Individualism-Collectivism Scale (Hui, 1988). Scores were most collectivist on Parent and Kin subscales. Women scored more collectivist on the Parent subscale than did men. Students' scores also differed according to university attended. Those attending a university which charged moderate tuition scored as more collectivist on the Parent and Spouse subscales than those attending a university which charged higher tuition, thus attracting students from wealthier backgrounds. There was also an interaction between gender and university attended with women attending the middle socioeconomic university scoring as most collectivist. These results offer a description of collectivism in Mexico and support previous findings that link an emphasis on family relations with collectivism.

According to Hofstede (1980) Mexico can be described as a collectivist country. Mexico shares this cultural description with 70 percent of the cultures of the world (Bell, 1987). A collectivist culture is one in which it's members perceive themselves as part of a group, value interdependence and sharing, and derive their identities from the group or family rather than from individual accomplishments. In such cultures ingroup goals are often primary over personal goals, and harmony within the ingroup is very important (Triandis, 1989).

Collectivist individuals differ from individualists in the extent of integration with other people. Collectivism does not mean a denial of the individual's well- being or interest. It is an assumption that the best guarantee for the individual is obtained by maintaining the well-being of the group (Ho, 1978).

One domain in which collectivism is expressed is with regard to the family and kin. Collectivists demonstrate more integration with, and concern for, their relatives.

Consistent with the collectivist label, Mexican culture emphasizes the importance of family unity. The family has been said to be the psychosocial unit of this culture, with loyalty to one's parents being a major component (Diaz-Guerrero, 1977). Considering this focus on the family, it was expected that Mexican university students would score most collectivist on the Parent and Kin subscales of a collectivism scale (Hui, 1988).

It was also expected that Mexican women would respond in a more collectivist manner than Mexican men. This expectation was based on literature which discusses the attitudes and behavior of women in a way that corresponds with collectivism (Bartol, 1976; Eagly, 1987; Gilligan, 1982; Manhardt, 1972; McClelland, 1975; and Williams, Giles, and Edwards, 1977).

Method

Participants

Seventy nine Mexican citizens participated as volunteer subjects. They were students at two private universities located in a large city in south central Mexico. The

universities differed in the amount of tuition charged, and according to several local informants one (University 1) is generally considered to be a middle-class university and the other (University 2) is generally considered to be an upper-class university. The average age of the students was 20 years.

Instrument

The Individualism-Collectivism Scale (INDCOL) (Hui, 1988) was administered. A 6 point Likert scale measured subject responses to the 63 items on the scale. The INDCOL scale is composed of 6 subscales which distinguish between different types of relationships. The subscales measure individualism-collectivism as the subjects respond to statements addressing beliefs, attitudes, behavioral intentions, and behavior. The subscales are labeled as Spouse, Kin, Friend, Parent, Coworker/Classmate, and Neighbor. The INDCOL Scale was translated into Spanish (and back-translated to produce the most appropriate translation).

Data analysis

Data were analyzed by a multivariate analysis of variance with the 6 subscale scores as the dependent measures. Each of the subscale scores was analyzed by a 2 X 2 (school by gender) analysis of variance.

Results

Figure 1 depicts the mean scores for the different subscales of the INDCOL. There were significant differences among the subscales, using Wilks criteria, $F(6,62) = 387.85$, $p < .001$, and post hoc tests. The students scored as most collectivist on the parent subscale.

On the parent subscale women ($M = 1.19$) scored as more collectivist than men ($M = 1.49$), $F(1,63) = 6.07$, $p < .05$. Students attending University 1 scored as more collectivist than those attending University 2, $F(1,63) = 10.13$, $p < .01$ (see Figure 2). In addition, there was a significant interaction between gender and university attended, $F(1,63) = 6.01$, $p < .05$ (see Figure 3). Women students from University 1 scored as the most collectivist. On the spouse subscale, students from University 1 scored as more collectivistic than did students from University 2 , $F(1,63) = 6.72$, $p < .05$ (Figure 2).

Discussion

It has been reported that family relationships are the most important characteristic of Mexican culture (Diaz-Guerrero, 1975; and Riding, 1984). The result that collectivism was greatest on the parent subscale suggests that parent relationships are a central part of collectivism in Mexico, as they are in other collectivist cultures (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Chandler, 1979; Diaz-Guerrero, 1977; Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, Marin, Hui, Lisansky, and Ottati, 1984; Triandis & Vassiliou, 1972; Riding, 1984).

In the present study kin relationships were found to be the next most collectivist. These results also support the literature which associates collectivism with extended family relationships (Hofstede, 1980; Hsu, 1983; Triandis, 1989; and Triandis, Marin, Betancourt, Lisansky, and Chang, 1982).

Mexican women, especially women of middle socioeconomic background, were more collectivist than men. Women are generally associated with nurturance, affiliation, social activities, helpfulness, and interdependence (McClelland, 1975; Williams et al., 1977). Such characterizations can also describe a collectivist individual.

Students who attended a university made up of students from middle socioeconomic backgrounds scored as more collectivist than the students from upper socioeconomic backgrounds. This effect may be related to the finding that more affluent individuals may feel more freedom from their ingroups (Triandis, 1989). Also there is evidence that individuals from collectivist cultures show a drop in collectivist tendencies as they become acculturated to more affluent individualist cultures (Triandis, 1989). Different socialization processes may also be a factor. Lower socioeconomic classes socialize for obedience; and their ideal child is one that is a good follower (Kohn, 1987). The child-rearing approach of the upper socioeconomic classes emphasizes independence, creativity, and self-reliance.

The findings of this report support the notion that family is an important component of collectivism in Mexican culture, and suggest that collectivism may be better understood by attending to socioeconomic class and gender variables.

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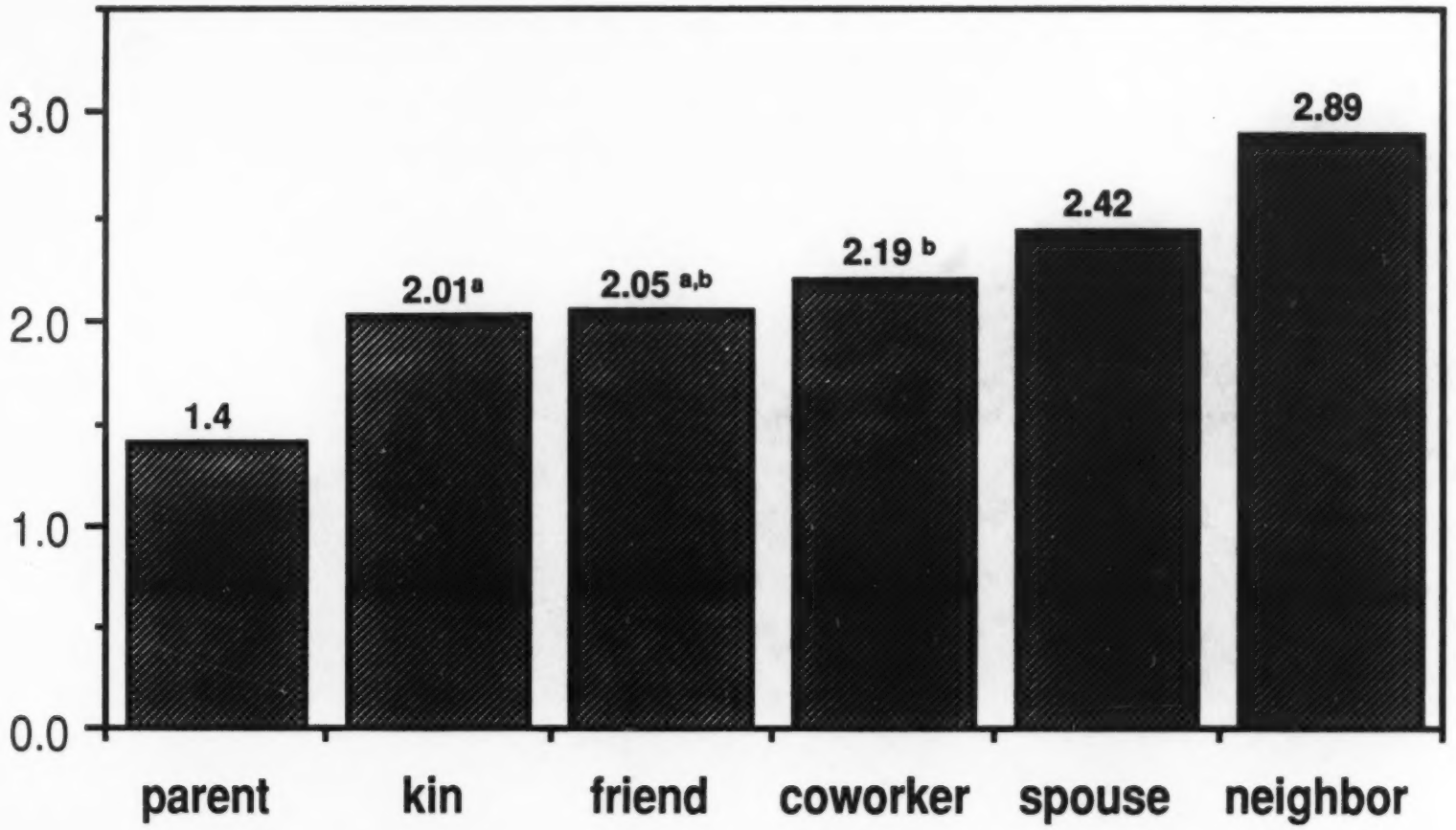
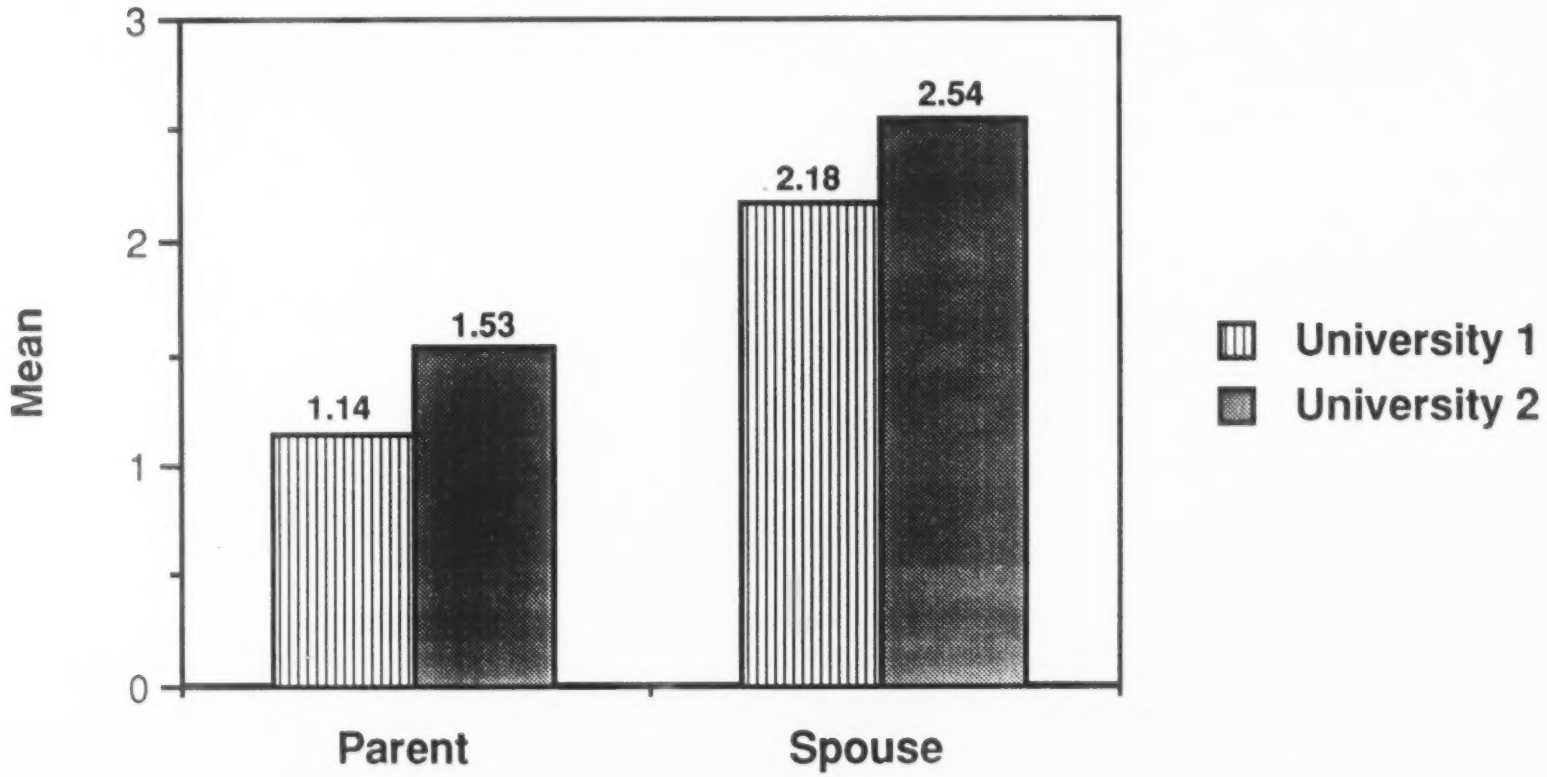
Figure 1. Mean Values for the Six Subscales



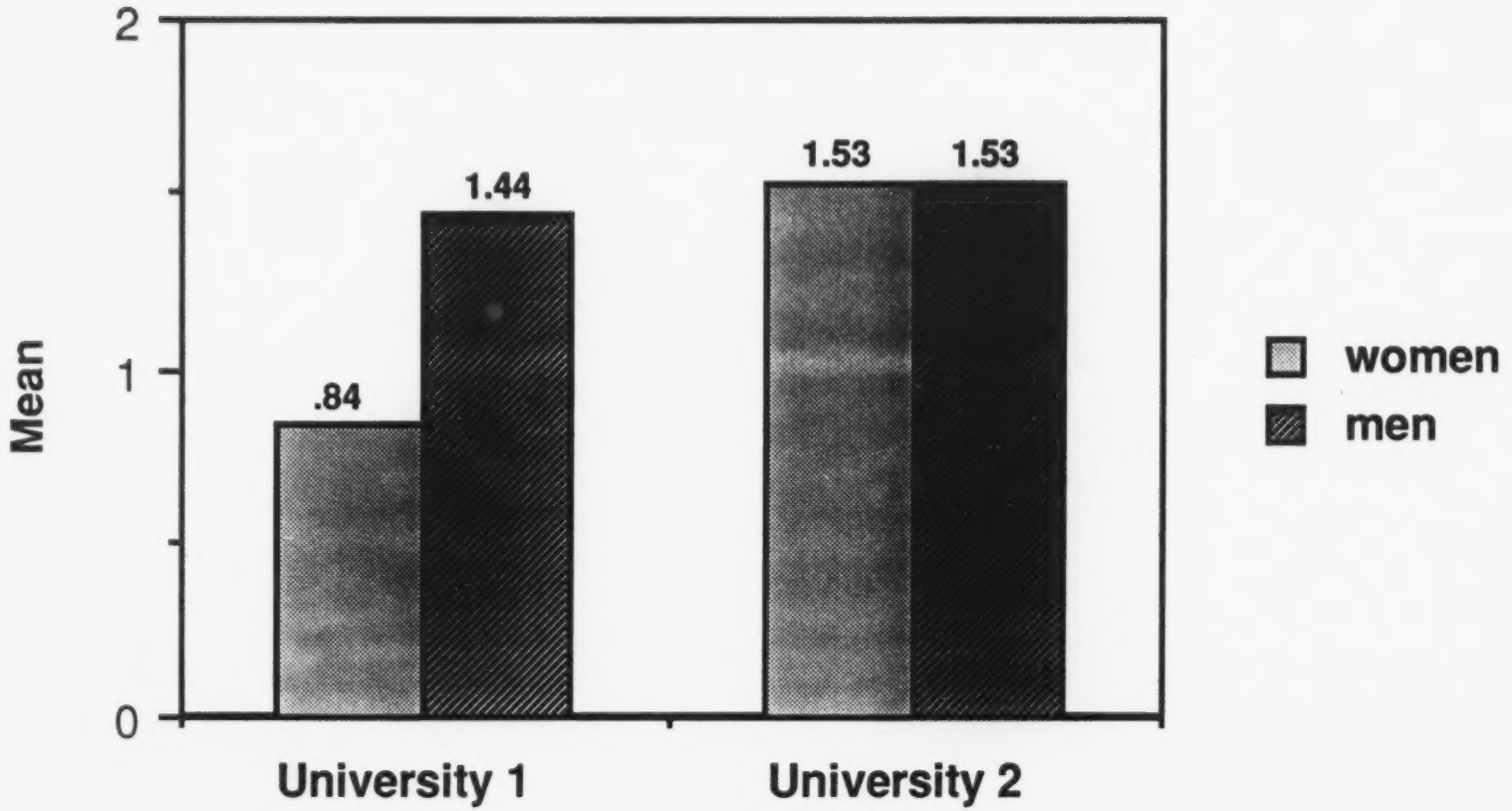
Note: Lower means represent more collectivism. Means which do not share a superscript are significantly different.

Figure 2. Individualism-collectivism on Parent and Spouse Subscales at Two Universities



Note: Lower means represent more collectivism. Students attending University 1 are primarily of middle socioeconomic background, and students attending University 2 are primarily of upper socioeconomic background.

Figure 3. Individualism-collectivism on Parent Subscale at Two Universities



Note: Lower means represent more collectivism. Students attending University 1 are primarily of middle socioeconomic background, and students attending University 2 are primarily of upper socioeconomic background.